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MANUSCRIPT ART

HISTORY AND ART OF BOOKBINDING.*

II.



THE French consider binding as a national art, and believe that they long ago distanced, and still excel, all other nations. When we look at the beautiful bindings which they have produced, we cannot but allow that they have great reason for their boast. At the same time, many English bindings, al-

though not equal to the finest productions of French art, are of a very high order of merit. It is also worthy of recollection that, at one time, there was a wave of Anglomania in France, which is alluded to by Lesné, in his poem on Bookbinding (1822), when speaking of Bozérian :

"Cet artiste amateur détruisit la folie
De regarder l'Anglais avec idolatrie."

We come now to consider more particularly the history of bookbinding in England. There is a large folio manuscript in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum which is bound in white skin, stained pink and stamped with large roses and dragons in a floreated frame. This volume is supposed to have been produced at Winchester in the fourteenth century, in which case it is an early specimen of an elaborate piece of leather binding.

Caxton was not a very excellent binder, and the designs on his books are of a simple character, much inferior to contemporary work abroad. The ordinary pattern he adopted, when he whole-bound, consisted of diagonal lines crossing each other, and forming lozenge-shaped compartments, in which were dragons and roses. Mr. Blades observes, in his "Life of Caxton," that the printer's sheets were not, as in modern practice, pressed between glazed boards after being printed, but went, without further process, from the press to the hands of the binder.

Pynson stamped his books with his device, as did also Wynkyn de Worde, who employed Nowel, a book-binder in Shoe Lane, and one named Alard. Pope writes in the "Dunciad :

"There Caxton sleeps, with Wynkyn at his side,
One clasp'd in wood, and one in strong cowhide."

John Reynes, bookseller and binder, residing at the "George," in St. Paul's Churchyard, was an artist of some mark—the first Englishman, in fact, who did work that could at all compare with that produced abroad. His devices consisted of two small shields, with his initials and monogram, and these he usually introduced in a large design. In a show-case in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum is a good specimen, in stamped leather, with an ancient ivory of the Crucifixion (fourteenth-century work) let into the upper cover. The leather and pattern are very roughly cut into for the purpose. The volume has Reynes's monogram on the side, and a very elaborate back. Mr. Libri remarks, in a note to his catalogue :

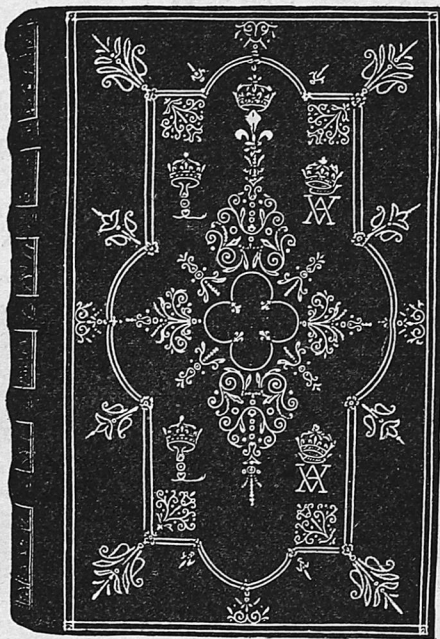
"In some of the most elaborate of Henry VIII.'s blind-tooled books, the instruments of the Passion are accompanied with the inscription, 'Redemptoris mundi arma,' a curious application of heraldry to the bibliopegistic art by the king's binder, John Reynes, to whom this device is attributed by Ames."

Many books appear to have been issued during the reign of Henry VIII. with the Tudor rose and royal arms embossed upon the old brown leather cover, which did not belong to the king.

There is a vellum manuscript by Skelton, at the British Museum, which has the Tudor rose supported by angels; with the motto round it, "Hec rosa virtutis de celo missa sereno eternum florens regnia sceptia

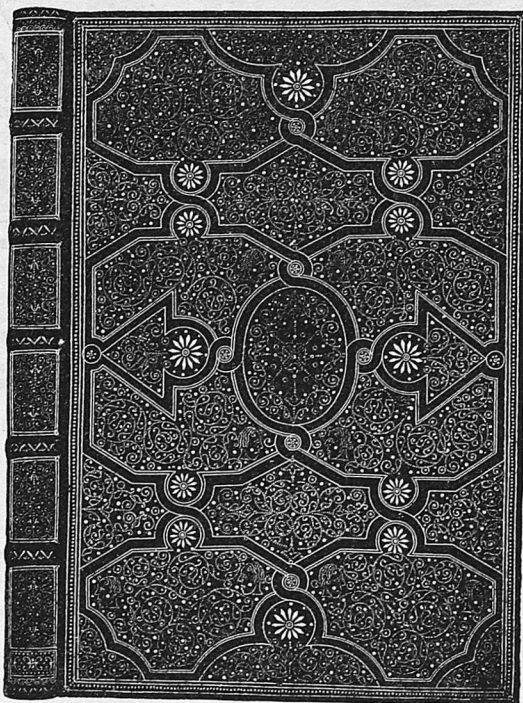
feret," on the top side of the book, and the royal arms, with supporters, on the under side. This is to be seen on numerous other specimens. Skelton himself was enthusiastic in praise of the bookbinding of his time, and writes :

"It would have made a man's hole that had be right sickly,
To behold how it was garnished and bound,
Encoverde over with golde and tissue fine."



FRENCH BINDING FROM THE COLLECTION OF LOUIS XIII.

Other binders of this period, whose names have come down to us, are Michael Lobley, William Hill, and John Toye. Thomas Berthelet, the king's printer, also bound largely the books he sold to Henry VIII. Most of the work done for Henry VII. and Henry VIII. was in blind tooling, and of a bold and effective character, but with little pretension to delicate art. There



FRENCH BINDING. BY LE GASCON.

were, however, some effective bits of gilt tooling produced for the latter king.

In the twenty-fifth year of Henry VIII. (1533), an Act of Parliament was passed, in the interest of English bookbinders, which was not repealed until the twelfth of George II., by which it was enacted "That no persons, resiant or inhabitant within this realm, after the feast of Christmas next coming, shall buy to sell again

any printed books brought from any parts out of the king's obeysance, ready bound in boards, leather, or parchment, upon pain to lose and forfeit, for every book bound out of the said king's obeysance, and brought into this realm, and brought by any person or persons within the same to sell again, contrary to this act, six shillings and eight pence."

In the reign of Edward VI., Grolier patterns were introduced into England. Some specimens of an elaborate and very artistic character have come down to us, while in some few instances that I have seen the design has been badly executed. There is a very elaborate binding of a book which once belonged to Queen Mary I. in the show-case at the British Museum. It is in Gothic style, with painted leather, and painted arms in the centre of the side. Considerable sums were paid for the binding of these books, as may be seen by reference to the household and wardrobe accounts of the time, and one naturally wishes to know the name of the artist; but we are constantly thwarted. It would be some satisfaction if we could associate a very choice piece of binding with the name of an eminent printer. In the British Museum is the presentation copy, from Fox, the martyrologist, to Queen Elizabeth, of "The Gospels of the Fower Evangelists. Printed by John Daye," 1571. It is bound in brown calf, with a centre block, and corners inlaid with white kid, or morocco. The royal arms and E. R. are tooled on the calf, which is also beautifully studded with gold. There is an exquisite design worked on the white leather, in which the initials "I. D. P." are introduced. Mr. Charles Tuckett, who gave a plate of this in his "Specimens of Ancient and Modern Binding," expresses the opinion that these may be intended to stand for "John Daye, printer." As, however, another book presented to Queen Elizabeth, but not printed by Daye, which is also in the British Museum, has the same binding, I am afraid the conjecture cannot be accepted.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, made a good collection of books, which were stamped with his device—the bear and rugged staff. In many instances, the binding is plain, and the device alone appears on the side; but sometimes there is a considerable amount of ornamentation. Fine specimens of binding have also come down to us from the libraries of such eminent men as Archbishop Parker and Lord Treasurer Burghley. Even the fierce Bothwell possessed some finely bound books.

James I. was an ardent lover of good binding, and he indulged his taste in this matter when he was simply James VI. of Scotland. John Gibson, of Edinburgh, held the office of royal binder, with an annual salary of £20 Scots; and if Mr. Tuckett is correct in ascribing to him a volume in the British Museum, bound in dark green Venetian morocco, he must have been a very considerable artist. This book, which is Thevet's "Hommes Illustres, 1584," is ornamented with elegant gilt scroll-work and the royal arms in the centre. The British Museum contains many other magnificent specimens of work done for this king, some ornamented with thistles, and others with fleurs-de-lys, and, in certain cases, both are combined. Henry, Prince of Wales, exhibited the same taste as his father, and gathered together a very fine library; most of these are ornamented with the Prince of Wales's feathers, and sometimes with fleurs-de-lys, in the four corners of the sides.

One of the most interesting chapters in the history of bookbinding in England, which has still to be written, will be that which contains the history of the Ferrar family. Nicholas Ferrar retired to Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire, with a colony of relatives, in the year 1624, and founded there a religious establishment, which, on account of the number of female inmates, was styled by the ignorant neighbors the "Protestant Nunnery." In "The Life of Ferrar," by Dr. Peckard, we are told that—

"Among other articles of instruction and amusement, Mr. Ferrar entertained an ingenious bookbinder, who taught the family, females as well as males, the whole art and skill of bookbinding, gilding, lettering, and what

* Abridged from the lecture of Henry B. Wheatley before the Society of Arts in London.

they called pasting-printing, by the use of the rolling-press. By this assistance, he composed a full harmony or concordance of the four evangelists, adorned with many beautiful pictures, which required more than a year for the composition, and was divided into 150 heads or chapters. For this purpose, he set apart a handsome room, near the oratory."

Several copies of this work were compiled and given to friends, one of these being George Herbert, the poet, after which its fame reached Charles I., who asked for one to be prepared for him. This was shortly afterward produced, and the "book was bound entirely by Mary Collet (one of Mr. Ferrar's nieces), all wrought in gold, in a new, most elegant fashion." Most of the bindings executed at Little Gidding consisted of embroidered covers of rich velvet, but the Ferrars did also produce some bindings in leather. There is in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum a volume of "The History of the Israelites," dated 1639, which consists of a sort of Harmony of the Books of Kings and Chronicles. It is bound in dark morocco, with gilt line tooling on the side, forming a series of oblong squares one within the other, gilt lines cross the back, and C. R. stamped at the foot. The volume is of great interest as a highly characteristic piece of binding. The "History of the Israelites" was prepared at the special desire of the king, who had frequently moved his chaplains to undertake the business without success. The copy presented to Charles is described as having been bound in velvet, most richly gilt; so that it is doubtful whether the morocco copy described above was a duplicate, or whether the velvet was a cover over the leather.

Bishop Cosin was a connoisseur in binding, and gave very full instructions to Hugh Hutchinson, the binder he employed. For instance, in 1671, he writes to his secretary, Miles Stapylton:

"Where the bookes are all gilded over, there must be of necessity a piece of crimson leather set on to receive the stamp, and upon all paper and parchment books besides. The like course must be taken with such bookes as are rude and greasy, and not apt to receive the stamp. The impression will be taken the better if Hutchinson shaves the leather thinner."

Large sums were paid by Cosin to Mr. House, the goldsmith, who prepared the metal-work for the ornamentation of certain of the books.

the seventeenth century, specimens of which are in the British Museum. I wish that we had means of finding out who were the artists, so that we might give honor where honor is due.

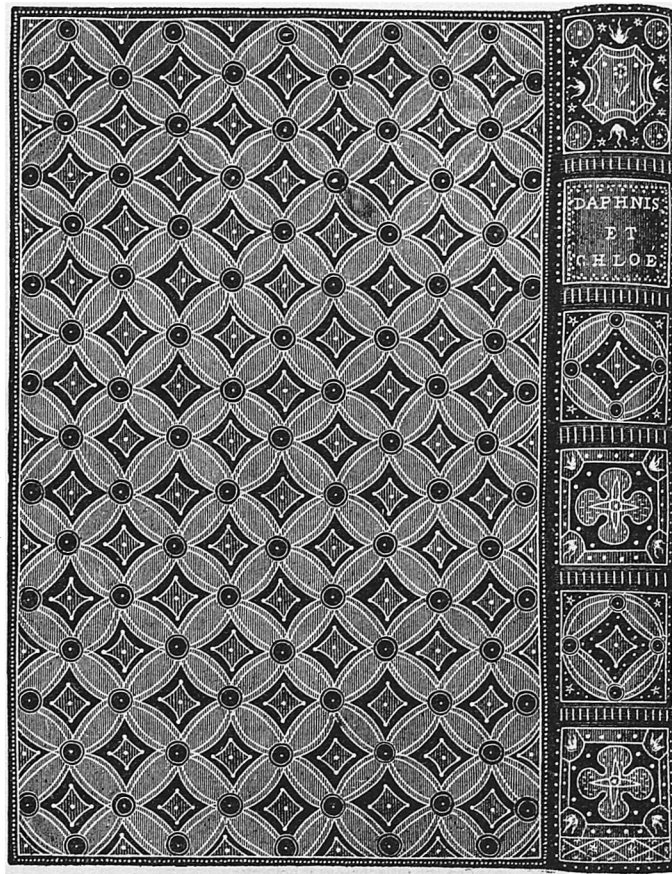
In that curious book, Dunton's "Life and Errors," several binders are mentioned, but they were mostly binders of long numbers. Honest Dick Janeway is said

eighteenth century arose Roger Payne, the most celebrated personage in the history of English bookbinding. This remarkable man was a native of Windsor Forest, and was apprenticed to Mr. Pote, the bookseller to Eton College. When he first came to London, he was employed by Thomas Osborne, and afterward was established in business near Leicester Square, by

Thomas Payne, the bookseller, about the years 1766-1770. He cut most of his tools himself, and formed a great variety of beautiful designs by combining them. His bills were very characteristic documents, and on that account many of them have been preserved. Here is part of the description of the work on "The Harmony of the World," by Haydon, 1642, which he did for Dr. Mosley: "Bound in the very best manner, the book sewed in the very best manner with white silk, very strong and will open easy; very neat and strong boards, fine drawing-paper inside, stained to suit the color of the book. The outsides finished in the *Rosie-Crucian* taste—very correct measured work. The inside finished in the *Druid* taste with acorns, and S. S. studded with stars, etc., in the most magnificent manner. So neat, so strong and elegant as this book is bound, the binding is well worth 13s., and the inlaying, the frontispiece, cleaning, and mending is worth 2s."

The prices charged by Payne were very low, considering the amount of labor he lavished upon his work. He only charged 3s. 6d. for cleaning and repairing Hughes's "Natural History of Barbadoes," with green morocco joints: "Nat. Hist. green, a proper color—very fine and strong drawing-paper to suit the color of the paper of the book, a fine sheet at the beginning and end of the book, and the sides of the boards covered with the same fine drawing-paper; the title was very dirty, which I have cleaned and mended as neat as I possibly could; the corners of the boards wanted a little mending, and the roughness of the leather put to rights as much as possible. I have done everything according to order, to do the best—make the book a fine copy.—3s. 6d."

Roger Payne's masterpiece was a copy of the Glasgow "Æschylus" (1795) in the possession of Lord Spencer, the binding of which cost the earl 16l. 6s. 10d. His favorite color was a pale olive, called by him Venetian. He seldom put much tooling on the side, and his strength lay in the appropriateness and charm of his designs. A short time before his death, he worked for



FRENCH BINDING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

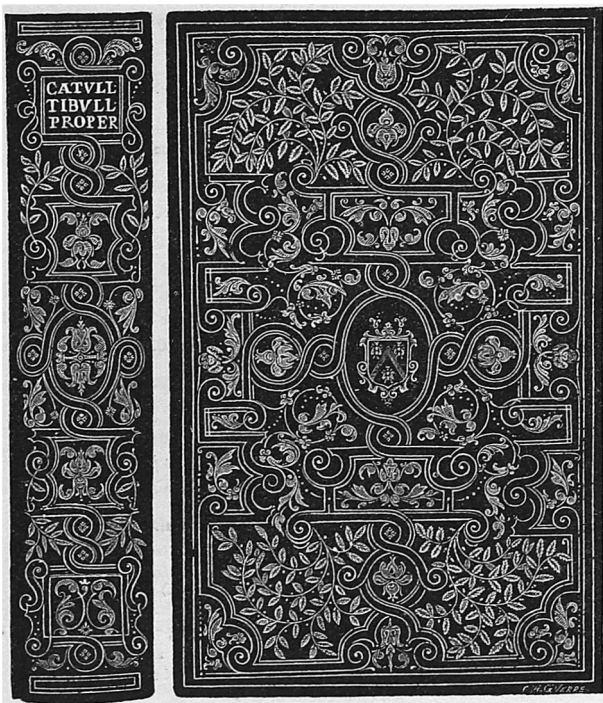
to be "an excellent binder and a tender husband." We are also told that Edmond Richardson, of Scalding Alley, "bound most of my calves leather books whilst I lived in the Poultry," and that Thomas Axe was "my chief binder for ten years." Baker, in Warwick Lane, "binds so extraordinary well, that two of my customers gave particular charge that no man in London should bind the books that they bought of me but Mr. Baker and Mr. Steel." Steel's binding, "for the fineness and goodness of it, might vie with the Cambridge binding." Mitchel, in Christopher's Alley, "was a first-rate binder," and Caleb Swinnock was the only man who could ever tempt Dunton "to take sheep's leather books at 14s. the hundred."

The Harleian Library, founded by the Prime Minister, Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, and continued by his son Edward, second Earl, was bound in a handsome manner, at a total cost of £18,000. The style adopted for many of the volumes consisted of a broad tooled border with centre panels, and the material was usually red morocco.

Elliott and Chapman, binders of some eminence in their day, were employed by the Earl of Oxford, but Wanley, that nobleman's librarian, had trouble with their bills occasionally, as they did not like the system adopted of supplying them with "my lord's leather." Mr. Chapman wanted to buy some of the morocco skins at a cheap price, but Wanley told him that "my lord will not turn leatherseller." Sometimes the binders were supplied with doeskins, which were to serve instead of calf, but the grain was found to be coarser, like that of sheep.

Thomas Hollis was accustomed to decorate his books with emblematical devices appropriate to their several subjects. He employed the celebrated artist Pingo to cut a number of tools for stamping on the sides and backs. The caduceus of Mercury was used for books of oratory and eloquence, the wand of Æsculapius for medical books, the cap of liberty for patriotic works, an owl for philosophy, and the pugio, or short sword used by the Roman soldiers, for military subjects. This style of binding was continued by Thomas Brand (Hollis), to whom Hollis left all his property and his name.

About the beginning of the second half of the



FRENCH BINDING. BY DE THOU.

Samuel Pepys was very choice in his books, and liked to have some specimens of the work of good binders in his collection. He mentions with commendation Nott, who bound Lord Chancellor Clarendon's library, but he does not tell us the names of those who put the gilding he so much admired upon the backs of his books.

Some very elaborate and beautiful inlaid work with filagree tooling was done in England near the close of



ENGLISH BINDING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

John Mackinlay, one of the best London binders of his day, who has the credit of having been the instructor of most of the celebrated artists who succeeded him. Payne died on November 20th, 1797, in Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, at the expense of Thomas Payne, the bookseller.

(To be continued.)